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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 L-03

MC-02 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04

USIA-15 PRS-01 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 EB-11 COME-00 OMB-01

DRC-01 /133 W
---------- 093280
R 102124Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2195
INFO USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
USCINCEUR
SHAPE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: FR, NATO, MASS, PFOR
SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT COMPETITION: FRANCE
CONDITIONALLY PLEDGES TO BUY MIRAGE F-1 M53'S IF EURO-
PEAN ALLIES DO THE SAME

SUMMARY: TO HELP SALE OF MIRAGE F-1 M53 AS F-104
REPLACEMENT, FRANCE REPORTED WILL BUY 40 OF THE PLANES IF OTHER
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ORDER THE SAME AIRCRAFT. PARIS
PRESS CONTINUES TO SPECULATE ON POSSIBLE FRENCH ENTRY
INTO EURONAD TO FACILITATE THE SAME END. END SUMMARY.

1. "FRANCE WILL EQUIP ITSELF WITH F-1 M53'S," SAID
FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTER JACQUES SOUFFLET, IN AN
IMPROMPTU TELEVISION INTERVIEW SEPTEMBER 8 AT THE
CLOSE OF THE PARIS VISIT OF DEFENSE MINISTERS FROM FOUR
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NATO COUNTRIES (BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS, DENMARK, AND

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NORWAY) SEEKING A REPLACEMENT FOR THE F-104. SOUFFLET DID NOT ELABORATE, BUT LEMONDE SAID SEPTEMBER 10 THAT FRANCE WOULD BUY 40 OF THE NEW MIRAGES "IF OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES CHOSE THE SAME PLANE." NO OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED AFTER THE MEETING, BUT LEMONDE SUGGESTS THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTERS WERE PLEASED WITH THE MIRAGE AND WITH THE FINANCIAL INDUCEMENTS FRANCE IS OFFERING FOR ITS PURCHASE (ACCORDING TO LEFIGARO, FRANCE IS WILLING TO SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE HER COMMERCE WITH NORWAY AND DENMARK AND TO LET THE DUTCH AND BELGIAN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRIES BUILD UP TO 80 PERCENT OF THE PLANE). REPORTEDLY, THE FRENCH ALSO PUSHED THE "BUY EUROPEAN" ARGUMENT AND THE FACT THAT THE MIRAGE F-1 WAS ALREADY OPERATIONAL AND THE M53 MOTOR DEVELOPED, WHILE THE AMERICAN COMPETITORS WERE STILL IN PROTOTYPE.

2. IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, THE WEEKEND EDITION OF LEMONDE (SEPTEMBER 8-9) CARRIED A COLUMN BY PIERRE-BERNARD COUSTE, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND A GAULLIST-ALLIED DEPUTY WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. COUSTE SPECULATES ON THE VIRTUES OF FRANCE JOINING THE EUROGROUP'S EURONAD SUBGROUP TO FACILITATE HER SUPPLYING THE EUROPEAN AVIATION MARKET, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME REMAINING INDEPENDENT OF NATO'S INTEGRATED MILITARY COMMAND. COUSTE SEEMS TO CAUTIOUSLY ENDORSE THE IDEA' SAYING "ONE CAN ASK HIMSELF IF WISDOM WOULD NCT COUNSEL THE RECONSIDERATION OF THE PROBLEM" (E.G. FRENCH MEMBERSHIP IN EURONAD).

3. COMMENT: THE DEFENSE MINISTERS POINTEDLY ASKED IF FRANCE WAS WILLING TO SUPPLY HER OWN AIR FORCE WITH THE PLANE SHE HOPED TO SELL HER ALLIES. (THE MINISTERS PLAN TO PUT A SIMILAR QUESTION TO DEFENSE SECRETARY SCHLESINGER WHEN THEY VISIT WASHINGTON SEPTEMBER 11-12.)

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R 102124Z SEP 74
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FRANCE'S CONDITIONAL RESPONSE PUT THE BALL BACK INTO THE OTHERS' COURT. THE FOUR POTENTIAL BUYERS (PARTICULARLY THE BELGIANS) MIGHT CONSIDER THE FRENCH RESPONSE ENOUGH OF A CONCESSION TO INFLUENCE THEM TOWARD CHOOSING THE MIRAGE. IF LEMONDE'S ACCOUNT IS CORRECT, THE FRENCH DID NOT SPECIFY IF THEIR PURCHASE WAS CONTINGENT UPON FRANCE CAPTURING ALL OR PART OF THE F-104 REPLACEMENT MARKET. MOREOVER, IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT THE FRENCH AIR FORCE IS COOL TO THE PURCHASE OF THE F-1 M53'S. IF IT IS FORCED TO SPEND LARGE SUMS TO ACQUIRE THIS AIRCRAFT, THE DVELOPMENT OF ITS CHERISHED ACF (AVIATION COMBAT DU FUTUR) COULD BE DELAYED OR SCRAPPED.

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4. THE COUSTE ARTICLE IN LEMONDE IS ONE OF SEVERAL PIECES RECENTLY APPEARING IN THE FRENCH PRESS WHICH AIR THE POSSIBILITY OF FRANCE ENTERING EUROGROUP OR EURONAD. NEITHER THE LEFT NOR THE GAULLISTS LOOK WITH FAVOR UPON A CLOSER FRENCH ASSOCIATION WITH NATO: BOTH HOWEVER, IN THE INTEREST OF FOREIGN ORDERS AND JOBS, WOULD LIKE TO SELL MORE MIRAGES. GISCARD MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THE STRENGTH OF THESE SENTIMENTS. (GAULLISTS AND LEFT BETWEEN THEM HAVE A MAJORITY OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES.) ARTICLES LIKE THAT OF COUSTE MAY BE PREPARING FRENCH OPINION FOR A GISCARDIAN

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DECISION TO "ASSOCIATE" FRANCE WITH EURONAD, AS A WAY FOR FRANCE TO RECEIVE A LARGER SLICE OF THE NATO PROCUREMENT PIE WITHOUT SACRIFICING FRENCH "INDEPENDENCE".
IRWIN

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